



September 12, 2008

HORSE SLAUGHTER BILL STALLS

As most of you are probably aware, horse slaughter has been discontinued in the United States. Legislation outlawing the practice has advanced in Congress the past several years, but has not passed. The bill gained support from many members of Congress, but it was legislation and litigation on the state level that shut down the two remaining horse slaughter plants last year. Since that time, horses have been trucked to slaughterhouses in Mexico and Canada. Animal rights activists are working hard to shut down this remaining avenue that horse owners have -- the trade and transport of horses for such a purpose.

At the urging of animal rights groups, legislation was introduced at the end of July by U.S. Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. The legislation would make it a criminal offense, punishable by a fine and/or up to three years in prison for anyone to possess, ship, transport, purchase, sell, deliver, or receive a horse with the intent to slaughter for human consumption. Earlier this week the bill, HR 6598, was scheduled for a vote in the Judiciary Committee. Chairman Conyers has control over the schedule of the committee.

During committee debate, several members of Congress expressed general concern over passing legislation to impose criminal penalties on a trading activity that is not currently illegal. After a short debate the committee process was interrupted by votes on the floor of the House of Representatives, and when the committee reconvened, debate moved to another subject. Such a move can indicate that the committee chairman is concerned that the bill may fail to garner enough votes to pass.

While this could be seen as a temporary victory, the animal rights groups pushing this issue will not go quietly into the night. They are well-funded and well-motivated and are known to press on toward their goals.

Russell Laird, Executive Director
Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference
American Trucking Associations
950 N Glebe Rd, Suite 210
Arlington, VA 22203-4181
703-838-7964 - office
703-859-5721 - mobile
rlaird@trucking.org